



# **Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) in Schools**

## **A Prevention Approach**

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# Objectives

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- This session will:
  - *Provide an overview of best practices in behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) in K-12 schools*
  - *Discuss how BTAM fits within a comprehensive approach to safe schools*
  - *Highlight how BTAM can be used for effective prevention and intervention*

# The Importance of Being PREPaREd

1. Crisis prevention and intervention is expected.
2. Preparation mitigates traumatic impact and facilitates recovery.
3. Multidisciplinary team membership and multiagency collaboration are essential.
4. Schools and school-age youth have unique needs.

## Five Mission Areas of Preparedness

WS 1

WS 2

1. **Prevention:** Avoid, prevent, or stop crises
2. **Protection:** Safeguard against crises
3. **Mitigation:** Lessen impact, reduce damage
4. **Response:** Reduce traumatic stress, stabilize, assist
5. **Recovery:** Return to precrisis function, restore



# Prevention is Key!

- Focus on climate and culture
- Breaking the “code of silence”
- Empowering each other to report concerns
- Early intervention and skill building
- Universal behavioral expectations
- Engaging student leadership

***Must attend to racism and discrimination!***

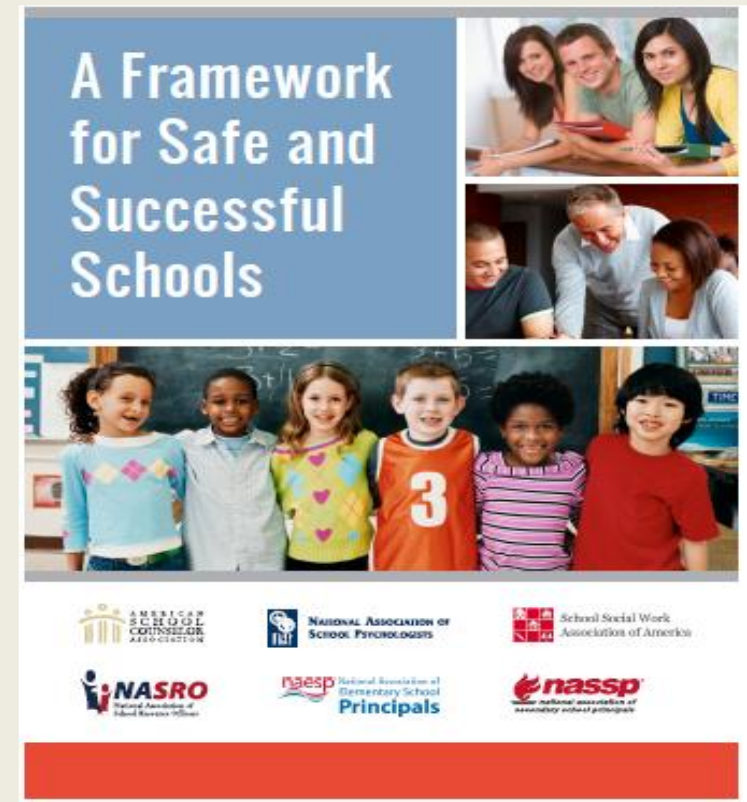
**CREATE SAFE  
SCHOOL CLIMATE**

Connectedness and relationships!

# Foundation: Comprehensive School Safety

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- **Framework:**
  - Safe and supportive school climate
  - Collaboration
  - MTSS
  - Integrated learning supports
  - Physical and psychological safety
  - Universal screenings
  - Data-based decision making
  - Evidenced-based interventions



<http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/a-framework-for-safe-and-successful-schools>

# Functional Annexes

## Prevention/ Protection

- Security

## Mitigation/Response

- Accounting for All Persons
- Communications and Warning
- Evacuation
- Shelter-in-Place
- Lockdown
- Reunification
- Public Health, Medical & Mental Health

## Recovery

- Recovery
- Continuity of Operations



## Goals:

- Addresses

### Public Health

- Disease outbreaks
- Information sharing

### Medical

- Staff medical first aid roles
- First aid supply management

### Mental Health

- Mental health crisis intervention
- Behavior threat assessment and management
- Suicide prevention and intervention

**Key Components: Coordination!**

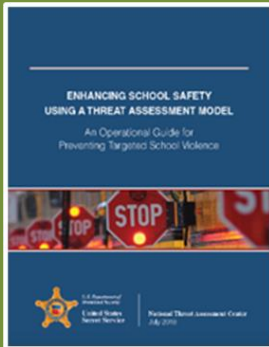
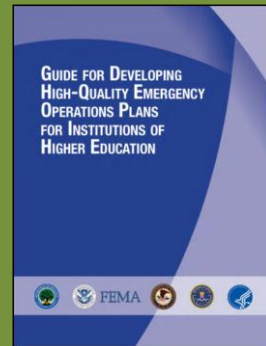
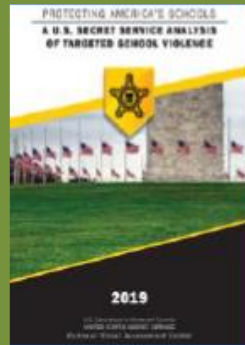
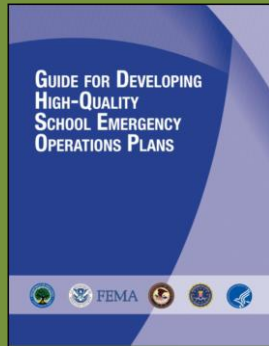




# THREAT ASSESSMENT



# Informed by Research & Practice



**Best Practice Resources**  
**US Secret Service/  
National Threat Assessment Center**

- <https://www.schoolsafety.gov/resource/protecting-americas-schools-us-secret-service-analysis-targeted-school-violence>
- <https://rems.ed.gov/REMSPublications.aspx>
- <https://www.cisa.gov/publication/enhancing-school-safety-using-threat-assessment-model-operational-guide-preventing>
- [www.fbi.gov/file-repository/making-prevention-a-reality.pdf](http://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/making-prevention-a-reality.pdf)
- <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/preventingattacksreport.pdf>
- <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/threatassessmentguide.pdf>

# **Understanding School Shootings and Implications for Prevention**



# Major Facts about School Shootings

Research from the U.S. Secret Service, FBI, and others show that:

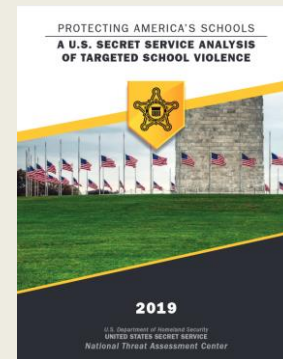
- School shooters typically don't "just snap." Instead, they plan out their attacks beforehand.
- Their planning behavior is often observable and follows a "pathway to violence."

Sources:

U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of Targeted School Violence in the U.S.* (2002). Washington, DC: Authors.

National Threat Assessment Center (2019). *Protecting America's schools: A U.S. Secret Service analysis of targeted school violence.* U.S. Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security.

National Threat Assessment Center (2021). *Averting targeted school violence: A U.S. Secret Service analysis of plots against schools.* U.S. Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security.



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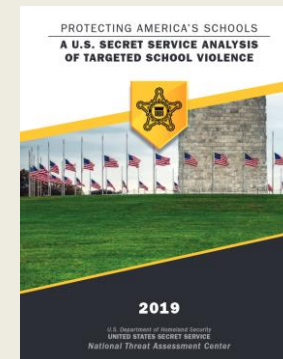
- In most cases, school shooters tell other people beforehand that they are planning a school shooting. They disclose plans through social media, homework assignments, comments to friends, etc.
- There is no accurate or useful profile of a “school shooter.”

Sources:

U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of Targeted School Violence in the U.S.* (2002). Washington, DC: Authors.

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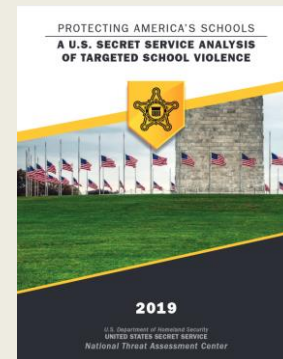
- Most attackers had seriously concerned others in their lives prior to the attack. They were already on multiple “radar screens.”
- Most attackers had significant difficulty coping with losses or failures or were even suicidal. We know how to help someone who is suicidal.
- Many attackers felt they had been bullied or harassed significantly. In a study of averted plots, almost half of those who plotted attacks had experienced bullying by peers.

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U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of Targeted School Violence in the U.S.* (2002). Washington, DC: Authors.

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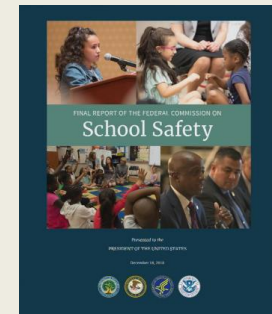


# Why Schools Should Use It

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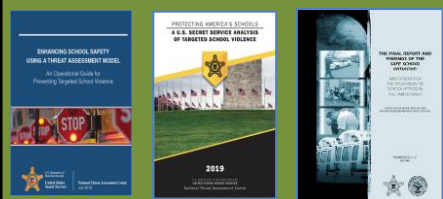
Behavioral Threat Assessment is recommended for use in schools by:

- The Federal Commission on School Safety (2018)
- Multiple federal agencies in the [Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans](#)
- Required by law for schools in Virginia, Maryland, Florida, Illinois, Texas, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Oregon, South Carolina, Kentucky, Minnesota, Ohio, and Washington, Pennsylvania....



# Best Practices and Implementation Fidelity

- More likely to receive counseling services, parent conference
- Less like to receive LT suspension/alternative placement
- Prevents overuse of suspension, expulsion – helps mitigate disproportionality with discipline when done properly
- Helps individuals onto a more positive pathway



## KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

*There is no profile of a student attacker.*



A systematic process that is designed to:



- **IDENTIFY** situations/persons of concern



- **INQUIRE** & gather information



- **ASSESS** situation



- **MANAGE** the situation/mitigate risk

# Pathway to Violence



*(Grievances)*

Difference between making a threat and posing a threat!

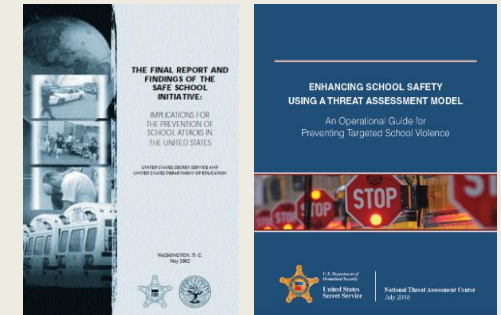
# BTAM IS NOT

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## Behavioral Threat Assessment is:

- NOT the same as profiling
- NOT adversarial
- NOT the same as a disciplinary process
- NOT a panacea for safe schools
- NOT an educational evaluation, special education evaluation, or a mental health evaluation
- NOT the same as a (functional) behavioral assessment
- NOT the same as other types of risk assessments
- NOT to be used for the purpose of exclusion
- NOT used to predict future behavior

*A threat assessment is a safety assessment*





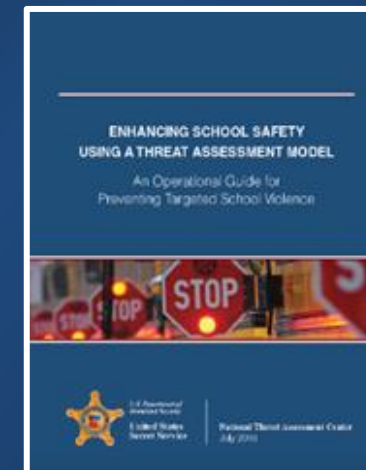
**BTAM is an intervention  
process...it is NOT a  
disciplinary process!**



# Building a School BTAM Program

1. Establish a multidisciplinary team
2. Define prohibited and concerning behaviors
3. Create a central reporting mechanism
4. Define threshold for law enforcement intervention
5. Establish threat assessment procedures
6. Develop risk management options
7. Create and promote safe school climates
8. Conduct training for all stakeholders

## 8 Steps



National Threat Assessment Center

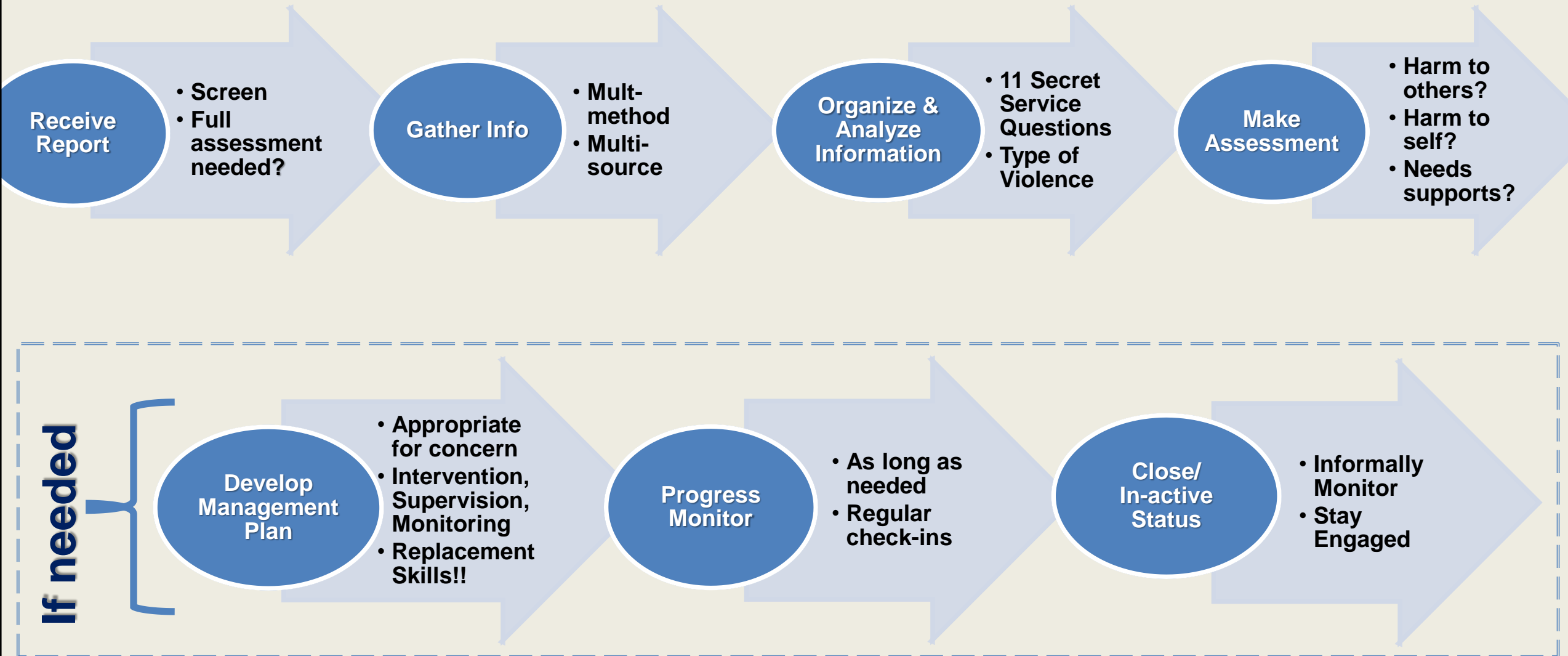
US Secret Service & US Dept of Homeland Security

# K-12 BTAM Evidenced-Based/ Informed Models

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- Secret Service/National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC)
- Comprehensive Student Threat Assessment Guidelines (CTAG)
- Salem Keizer Student Threat Assessment System

# Threat Assessment Procedures



# Develop a Case Management Plan

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Develop an individualized management plan based on information gathered in the investigation and other facts known about the person of concern.

- Case management is more art than science.
- Plan must be fact-based and person-specific.
- Engagement is essential, even when dealing with someone who is very angry.
- Distancing makes monitoring and intervention more difficult.
- Personalities involved matter.



# Individual & Family Supports

- **Managing person of concern:**
  - ✓ *Develop intervention and support plan*
- **Help reduce stressors**
  - ✓ basic needs (e.g., food banks)
  - ✓ social supports (e.g., mental health agencies)
  - ✓ behavior management strategies
  - ✓ safety measures
- **Build connections and relationships!**

## INTERVENTION & MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

*Must teach replacement skills.*

# Intervention & Support Planning

- Monitoring
- Skill Development
- Resiliency Building
- Relationship Building
- Environment and School Climate
- Discipline
- Additional Interventions...



***PUNISHMENT ALONE DOES NOT CHANGE  
BEHAVIOR!!***

# Student, Parents, and Educators

- Misinformation regarding BTAM
- Violation of due process, rights, IDEA
- Disproportionality
- Information sharing
- Foreseeability and negligence (liability)
- Being used for punishment
- Parental pressure to expel

**FIDELITY OF IMPLEMENTATION IS  
CRITICAL TO MITIGATING CONCERNS!**

## Concerns

Educators are Fearful to Engage - Liability



# **Best Practices in Prevention thru Recovery**



# SEL



# “Emotions Matter for...”

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- Attention, memory, learning
- Decision making
- Relationships
- Health and well-being
- Performance



# SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

## SEPARATING FACT FROM FICTION

SEL **boosts academic** performance and deepens engagement with content.

It is **not** a distraction from academics.

SEL builds relationships and skills that promote **healthy well-being**.

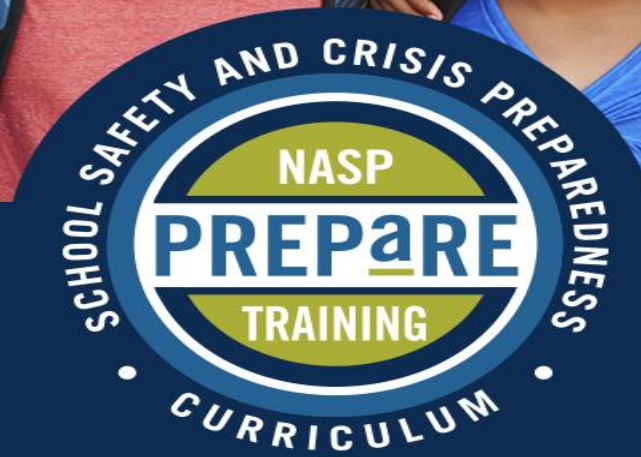
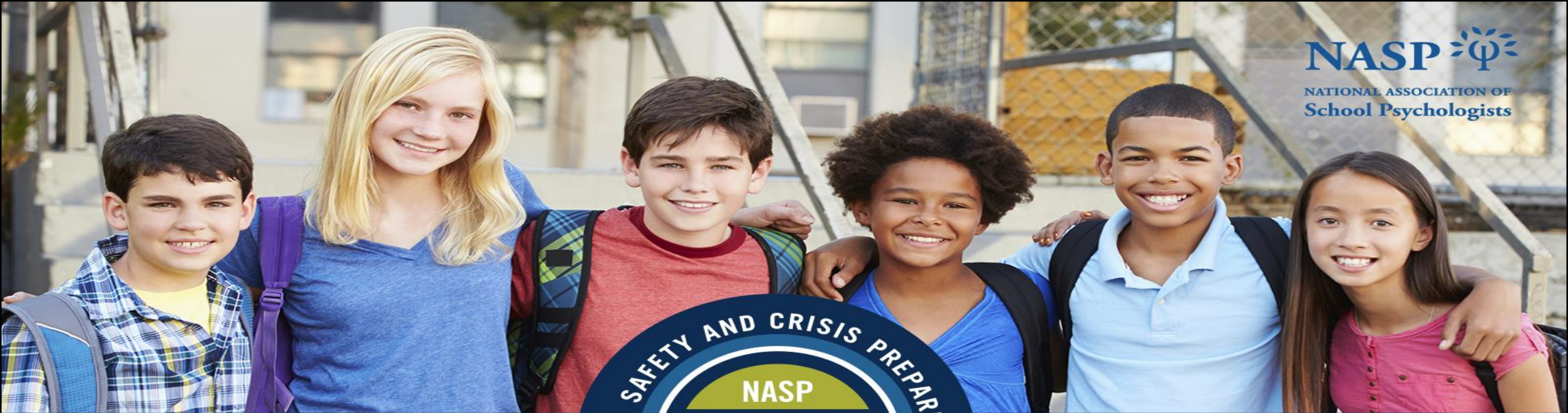
It is **not** therapy.

SEL helps students **understand different perspectives** and share ideas.

It is **not** a way to teach students a specific political agenda.

SEL is shaped by local priorities set by **schools, families, and communities**.

It is **not** one-size fits all.

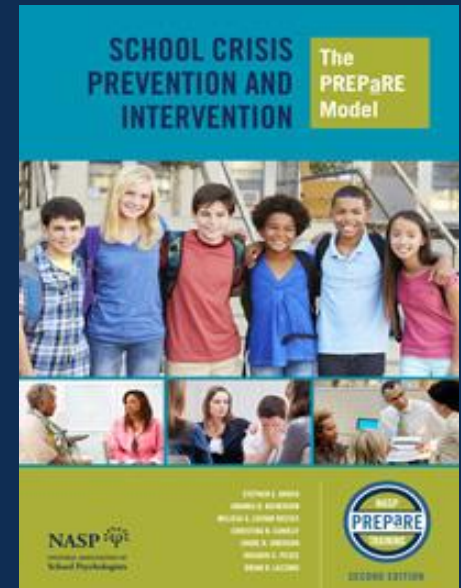


3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

*WS1: Comprehensive School Safety Planning*

*WS2: Mental Health Crisis Interventions: Responding to an Acute Traumatic Stressor in School*

<http://www.nasponline.org/prepare/index.aspx>



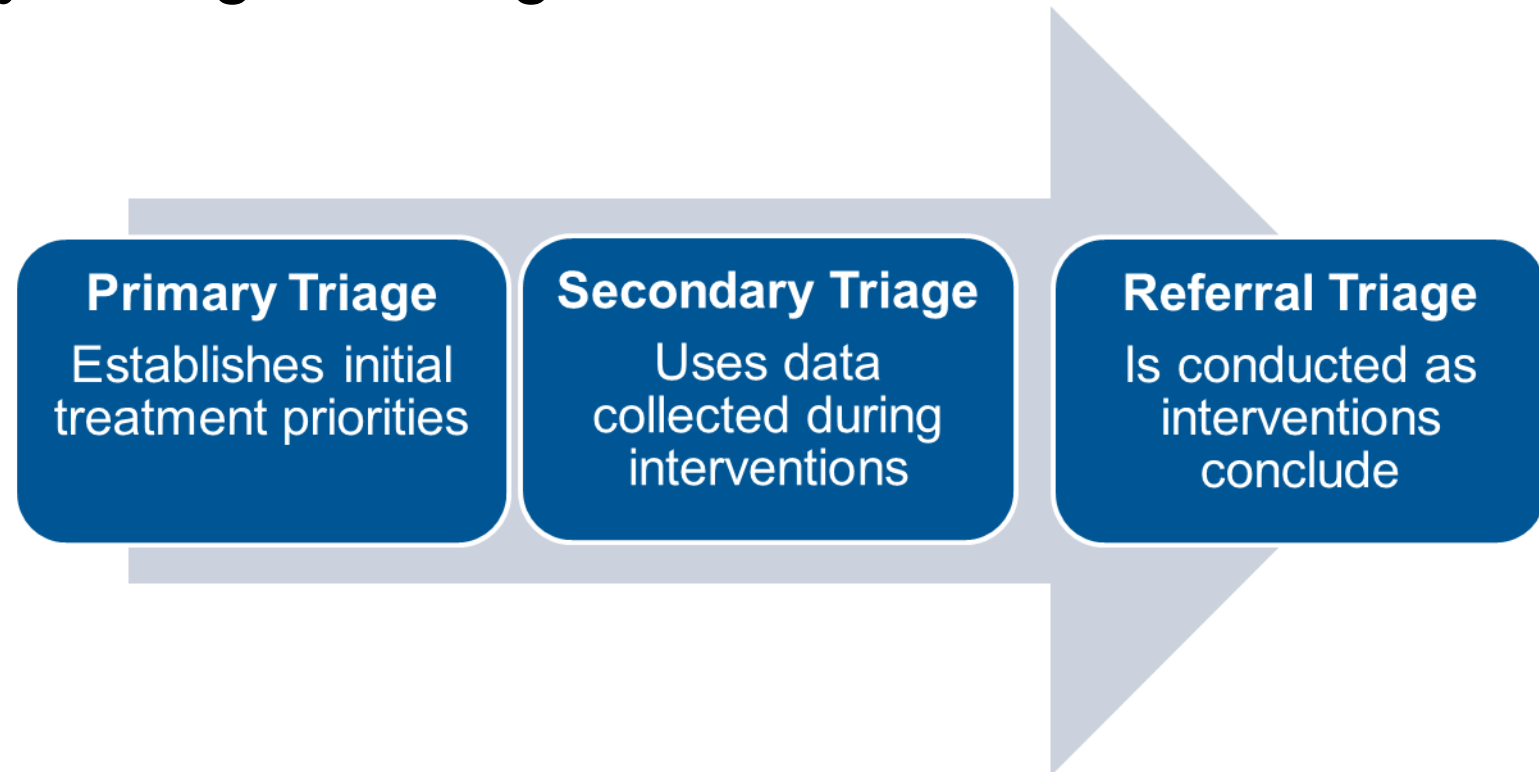


# The PREPaRE Model

<b>P</b>	<b><u>P</u>revent and prepare for crises</b>
<b>R</b>	<b><u>R</u>eaffirm physical health &amp; welfare, and perceptions of safety &amp; security</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>Evaluate psychological trauma risk</b>
<b>P <u>a</u> R</b>	<b>Provide crisis interventions and Respond to mental health needs</b>
<b>E</b>	<b><u>E</u>xamine the effectiveness of crisis preparedness</b>

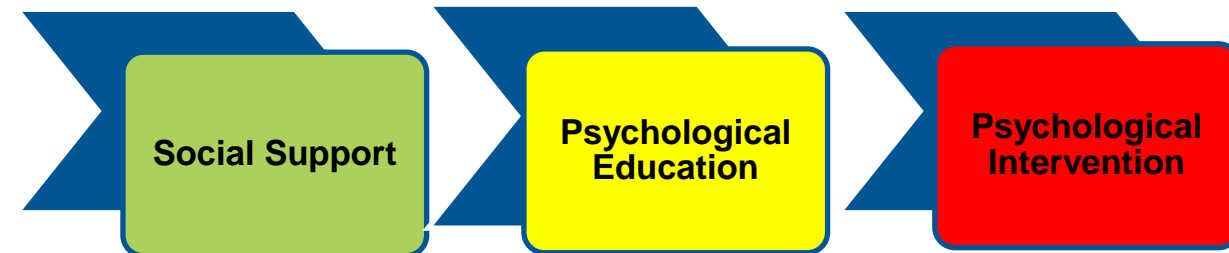
# Evaluate Psychological Trauma

- Conducting Psychological Triage
  - Primary
  - Secondary
  - Tertiary

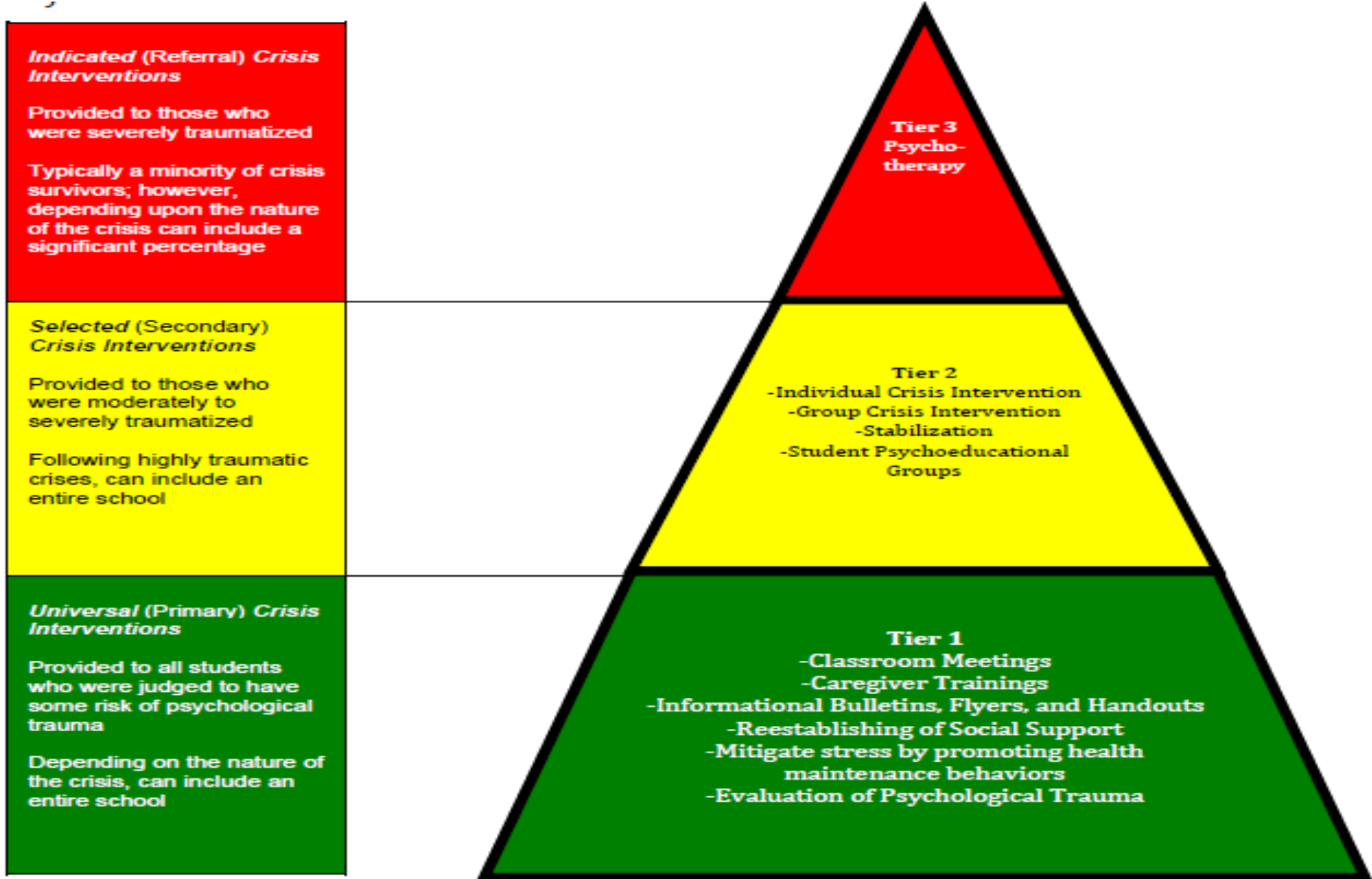


# Provide Interventions and Respond to Student Psychological Needs

1. Reestablish Social Support Systems
2. Psychoeducation:
  - Empower Survivors, Caregivers, and Teachers
    - Informational documents
    - Caregiver trainings
    - Classroom meetings
    - Student psychoeducational groups
3. Psychological Interventions
  - Classroom-Based Crisis Intervention
  - Stabilization
  - Individual Crisis Intervention
  - Psychotherapeutic Treatments (community referral)



## PREPARE Levels of School Mental Health Crisis Interventions



## Psychological Recovery

### Leadership

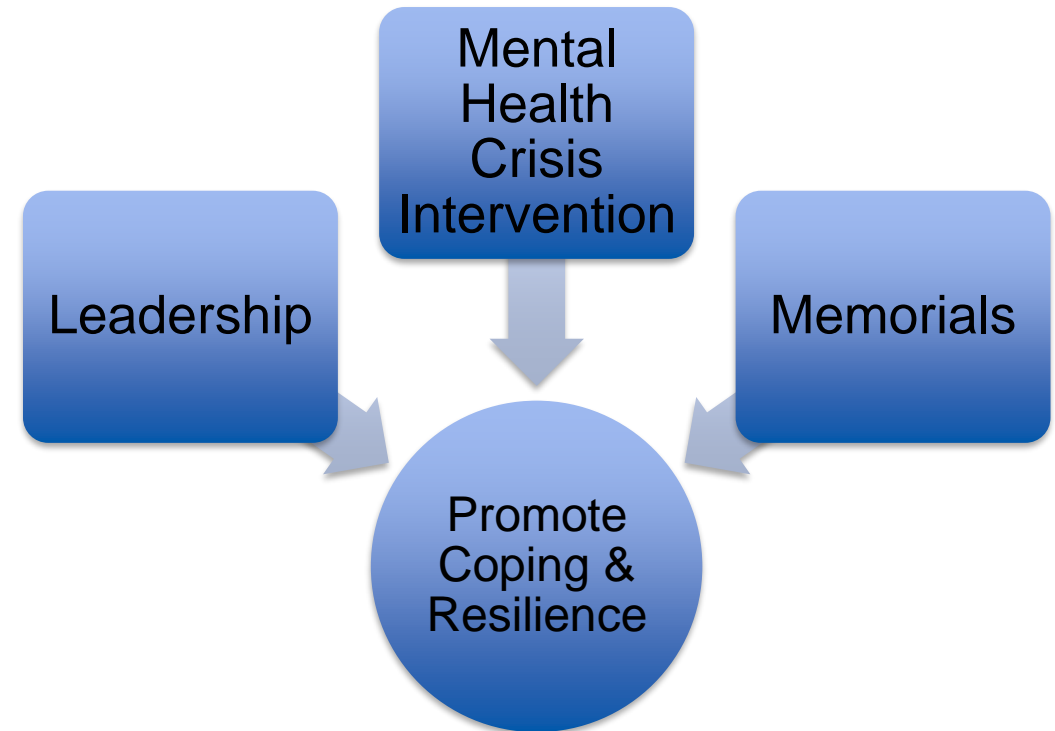
- MUST understand mental health recovery
- School mental health professionals lead response

### Mental Health Crisis Intervention

- Multitiered approach
  - PREPaRE WS2
- Focus on resilience

### Memorials

- Establish guidelines



# Summary

- Schools must engage culturally responsive practices.
- It is possible to prevent school violence and self-harm!
- Enhancing a school's climate improves school safety and social-emotional wellness and facilitate recovery
- Threat assessments identify concerning behaviors and engage supports!
- Program components should include access to:
  - Well trained multi-disciplinary team
  - High quality, ongoing safety and risk assessment training
  - Multi-tiered crisis intervention supports and resources
  - Accountability for implementation fidelity

# RESOURCES....





# Threat Assessment Resources

## Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM): Best Practice Considerations for K-12 Schools

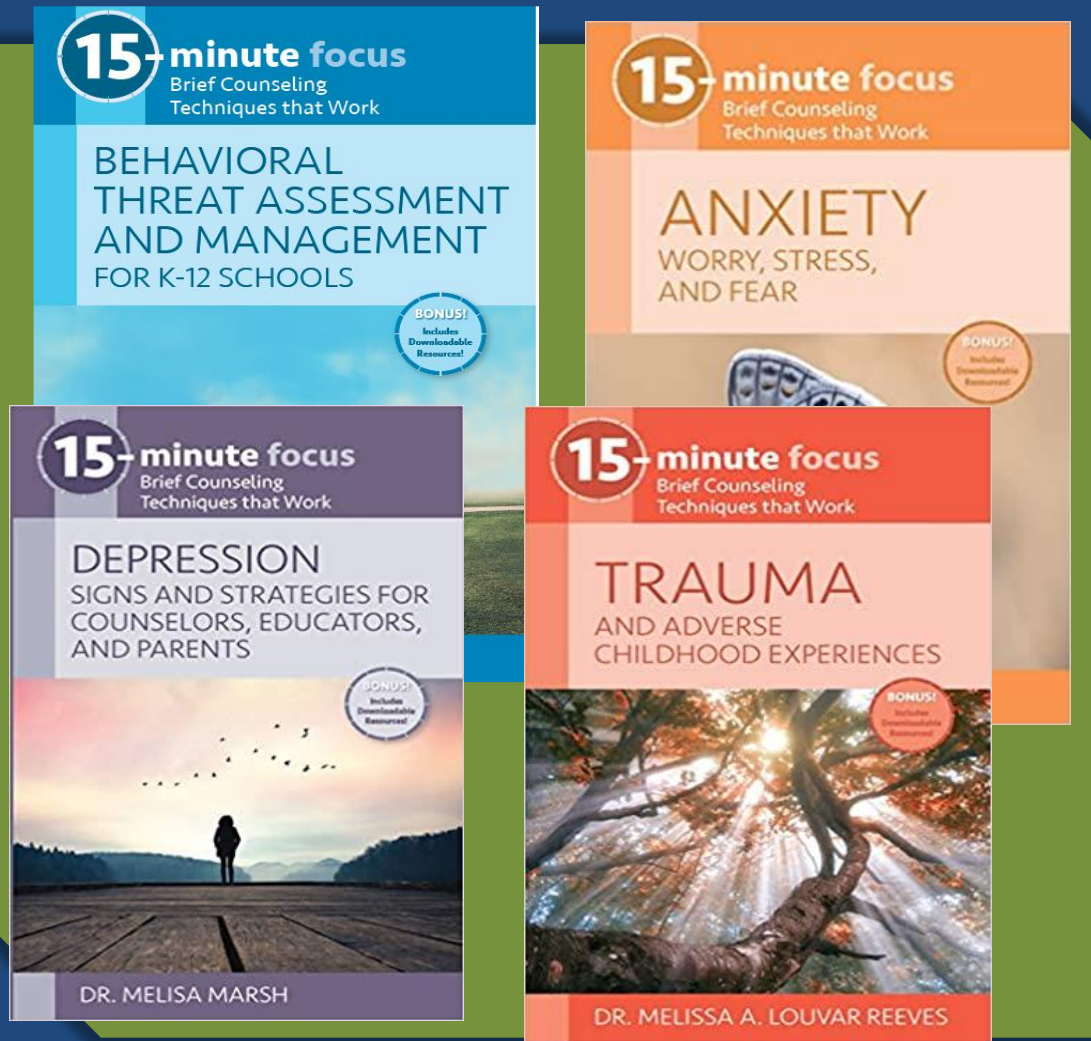
- [www.nasponline.org/btam](http://www.nasponline.org/btam)

## Upholding Student Civil Rights and Preventing Disproportionality in Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM)

- <https://www.nasponline.org/btam-sped>

National Association of School Psychologists





Practitioner Friendly: Administrators, Teachers,  
School Mental Health Professionals, Support  
Staff, and Parents – under \$18.00

# 15-Minute Focus Series

- <https://ncyi.org/shop/landingpages/15-minute-focus-series/>
- Also includes:
  - *Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management*
  - *Growth Mindset, Resilience, & Grit*
  - *Diversity, Bias, and Privilege*
  - *Counseling Techniques*
  - *Anger and Aggression*
  - *Anxiety, Depression, Suicide*
  - *Trauma*
  - *Grief*
  - *And more....*

# PREPaRE Crisis Prevention & Intervention Curriculum

- Workshop Descriptions & Target Audiences
- Program Evaluation Data
- Upcoming Trainings
- List of Local Trainers
- FAQs



<http://www.nasponline.org/prepare/index.aspx>

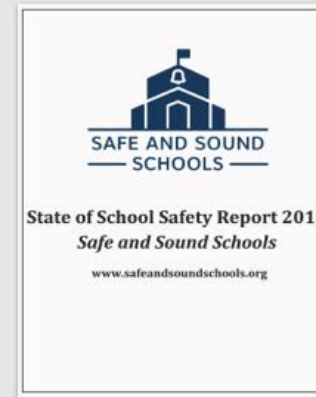
# Safe and Sound Schools



Resources



Programs



Reports



Trainings

[www.safeandsoundschools.org](http://www.safeandsoundschools.org)

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